



**Effective Youth Development:
A Strategy to Prevent Juvenile Homicides and
Youth Violence**

Findings and Operational Recommendations Developed by:
Office of the Deputy Mayor for Children, Youth, Families and Elders

In collaboration with:

**District Government Stakeholder Agencies
Youth and Family Service Providers
Youth and Family Advocates**

“Helping Children Grow Up Fully Prepared and Fully Engaged”

Presented to:

**Anthony A. Williams
Mayor**

**Robert C. Bobb
City Administrator and Deputy Mayor**

March 2005

Statement of the Issue

Of the utmost importance to the Williams Administration and the City as a whole is reversing the alarming increase from 2003 to 2004 in the number of juvenile homicides and incidences of youth violence in the District of Columbia. The steps we take to more effectively address the problem of juvenile violence, an issue of such critical importance and dire consequences, must occur within the context of a long-term and more comprehensive City-wide strategy to promote and ensure the healthy and positive development of our youth.

In 2000 the Mayor's Office of Policy released the Safe Passages Action Plan, which analyzed the state of services to children in the District and outlined a comprehensive approach of coordinated services and supports to promote healthy development of the City's young people. The District continues to make progress in the general areas identified for serious reform: service system, community partnerships, policy and legislation, and information technology. However, as we enter the year 2005, we must also recognize that the problem of juvenile homicides and youth violence in 2004 exhibited an alarming increase over 2003 -- after years of significant decline.

Clearly all stakeholders must come together in a very deliberate way to ensure a return to more positive outcomes and successful transitions for our youth. In order to achieve a 100% reversal in the incidences of juvenile homicides and violence by and against youth, there must be a renewed commitment and determination of all three branches of District government, as well as an increased and more visible level of collaboration with our schools, businesses, community-based and faith-based organizations, youth and their families, and the community as a whole.

The Office of the Deputy Mayor for Children, Youth, Families and Elders wholeheartedly endorses the following core principles of a positive youth development strategy, as described by the youth and family advocates and service providers contributing to this report: "providing youth with opportunities to make and implement decisions; challenging youth to reach their full potential; providing environments in which young people can further develop their social, civic, cognitive, and emotional competencies; ensuring that necessary services and supports are available to young people; engaging the whole community; and ensuring that youth are engaged by caring and supportive adults."¹ These core principles must serve as the basis for implementing the recommendations proposed herein.

Measurable Outcomes

As District stakeholder agencies, youth and family service providers and advocates, and community and faith-based partners join together in embracing new strategies and programming to more directly address the problem of juvenile homicides and youth violence, we must also demonstrate the will to reach a consensus on the indicators known to contribute to the problem. By reaching agreement on common performance measures and outcomes around this very

¹ Letter dated March 4, 2005, DC Action for Children, incorporating the recommendations of DC ACT, the Columbia Heights/Shaw Family Support Collaborative, the 2M Center and others.

serious issue, we will be better able to evaluate the effectiveness of neighborhood-based programs and services, and create a greater degree of accountability for the prevention, intervention and law enforcement activities of public agencies focused on reducing the number of juvenile homicides and violent juvenile behavior in the District.

To be truly effective, our positive youth development strategy going forward can not rely exclusively on the success of new initiatives and results for older youth. We must also remain committed to sustaining the trends in positive outcomes reported for children and youth in the early years of development. For example, according to the *KidsCount* Data Book 2003, children born to teen mothers “are twice as likely to drop out of high school, twice as likely to have a child before age twenty, and one and one-half times as likely to be ‘idle’ – out of school and out of work – in their late teens and early twenties.” Despite the horrific rise in the number of female juvenile victims in 2004, the percent of births to teen mothers in the District dropped for the sixth consecutive year to 12.8% in 2002, and the percentage of all District mothers receiving adequate prenatal care continued to rise.

A positive youth development strategy must also recognize a continued investment in the juvenile crime prevention work of our community-based organizations (CBOs), particularly those CBOs that are working with high-risk and older youth. This year, the Children Youth Investment Trust Corporation (CYITC) dedicated a significant amount (34%) of local dollars in roughly 50 CBOs working with youth in both in-school and out of school programming. Of the \$5,195,000 in grants awarded, \$1,795,000 in funding was specifically awarded to programs working with youth between 14-24 years of age. These organizations should continue to be supported in carrying out their current work.

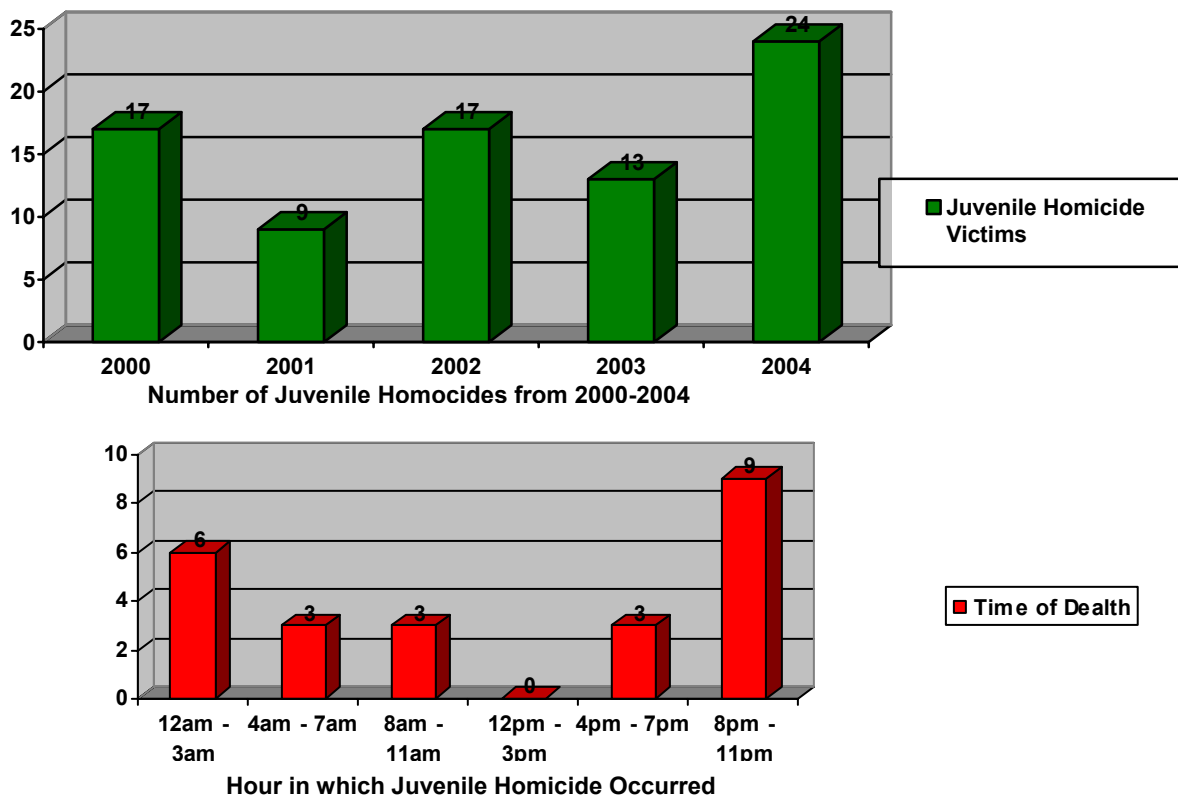
For the remainder of 2005 and beyond, the District-wide Youth Development Strategy, as proposed herein, should be measured by how well we are able to sustain substantial progress over the short-term and long-term on each of the following outcome measures:

1. Continued reduction in the teen birth rate (including second pregnancies)
2. Elimination of the waiting list for subsidized child-care slots
3. Increase in the number of children and youth participating in out-of-school time recreational, vocational and employment programs by 50% by fiscal year 2007
4. Reduction in the percentage of youth truant from school each year at all grade levels
5. Provision of wrap-around services and supports available to 100% of youth transitioning into independent living arrangements from the child welfare or juvenile justice systems
6. Increase by 1,000 the number of youth receiving peer mentoring services, with a minimum of 50 paid mentors employed full-time to work with 20 youth each
7. Reduction in the number of incidences of violent crime committed by youth
8. 100% Reduction in the juvenile homicide rate

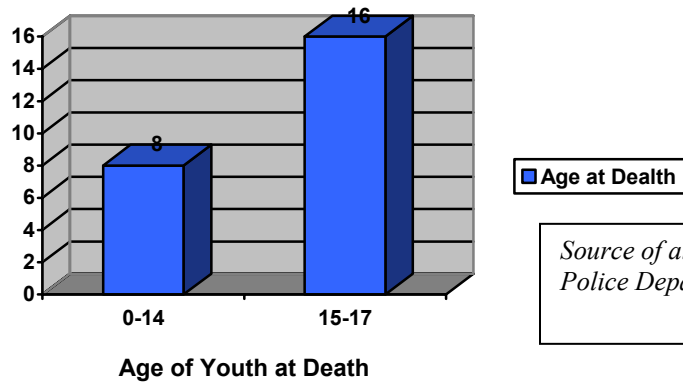
Alarming Juvenile Characteristics in the District of Columbia

During 2004, 24 juveniles under the age of 18 were murdered in the District, nearly double the number of juvenile homicide victims in 2003 – when there were 13. Seventy-five (75%) of all juvenile homicides in 2004, and ninety-two (92%) of all juvenile homicides in 2003, occurred in the Fifth, Sixth, and Seventh police districts. Also, during 2004 the majority of juvenile victims were murdered between the hours of 9:00 PM and 3:00AM.

The Picture of Juvenile Homicides in the District of Columbia



Juveniles between the ages 15 to 17 remained the highest risk age group in 2004, with 16 of the 24 juvenile murder victims in this age range, and all victims – male and female – were black. Of the 16 victims in the 15-17 age group, 10 had prior arrests, and some had multiple contacts with the juvenile justice system. Although the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) maintains similar data on the juvenile perpetrators arrested for these horrific crimes, confidentiality restrictions have generally precluded the sharing of law enforcement information on individual juvenile perpetrators with social services agencies.

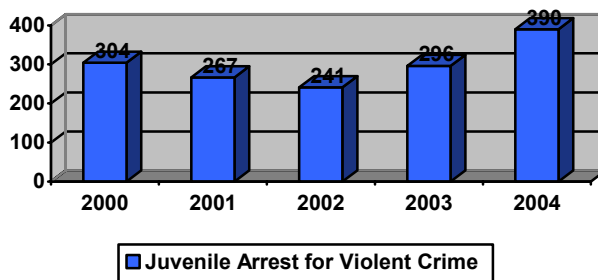


Source of all data Metropolitan Police Department, 2004

The Omnibus Juvenile Justice Act of 2004 now specifically authorizes the sharing of juvenile records information between social services agencies and the D.C. Public Schools for the purpose of providing treatment and services to youth charged with an offense. The Office of the Deputy Mayor for Children, Youth, Families and Elders is working with the Office of the Attorney General to determine the need for additional legislation that would specifically authorize the central collection of this critical information for the purpose of tracking and evaluating the effectiveness of our system-wide prevention and intervention efforts (i.e. actual treatment and services being received, multiple agency involvement, community supports etc.) on individual juvenile perpetrators and their families.

Juvenile Violence

In addition to the 2004 increase in the number of juvenile homicides over 2003, the number of juveniles arrested for violent crime also increased between 2003 and 2004 after nearly a decade of decline -- from 296 in 2003 to 390 in 2004. Violent crime is defined as homicide/manslaughter, rape, robbery/carjacking, and aggravated assault. It is noteworthy that the long-term decline and the short-term increase in arrests for juvenile violent crime also correspond with the reported increases in both unemployment and truancy, strongly suggesting a link between idleness, disengagement from school, and violent behavior.

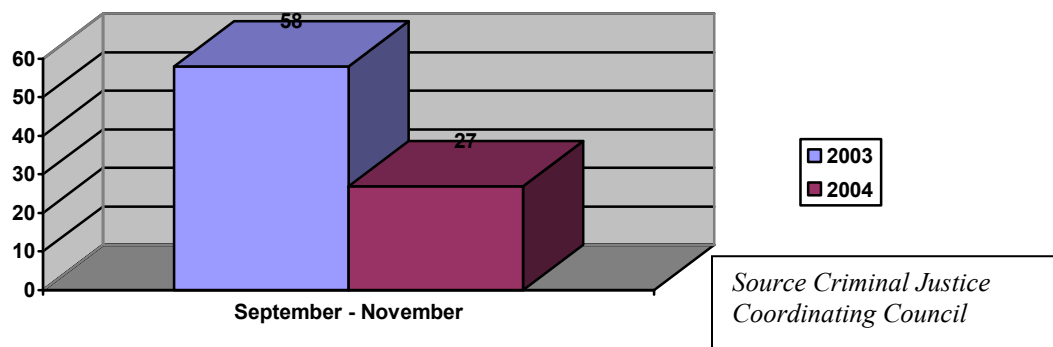


Truancy

The District's truancy rate is above the national average. Truancy has been documented as a significant risk factor in contributing to under socialized, aggressive, delinquent and conduct disordered behaviors in children and youth. We know that chronic absenteeism, particularly at the elementary and middle school levels – is all too often the path toward status offenses and delinquent behavior. Furthermore, unabated truancy during adolescence also significantly compromises a student's overall academic performance.

Although it is too early to measure the effectiveness of new initiatives to more directly address the problem of school truancy, the active collaboration between the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA), Metropolitan Police Department, D.C. Public Schools and the Family Court appears promising. The Board of Education has also passed a resolution to enhance truancy policies in the District of Columbia.

In measuring a single point in time (September – November), between 2003 and 2004, the number of elementary school truants decreased by 41% according to data compiled by the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council.

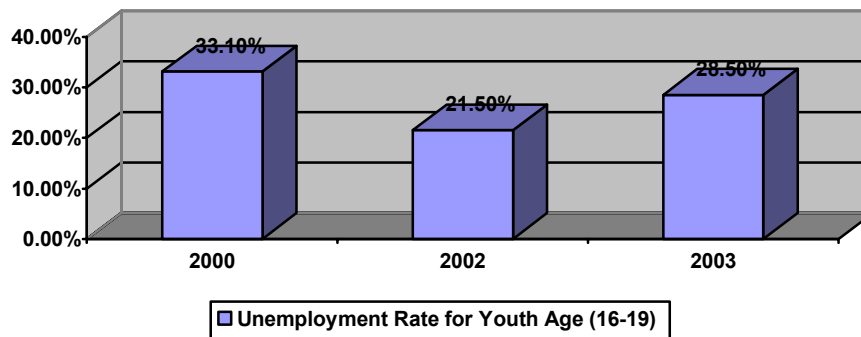


As a result of the active involvement of all stakeholders in addressing the issue of school truancy, the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Children, Youth, Families and Elders is very interested in working with District stakeholder agencies, the Chief Judge of the Superior Court and the Presiding Judge of the Family Court on the development of a Truancy Court in the District of Columbia. To achieve reductions in the school truancy and the school dropout rate, alternative school suspension and education programs must also be seriously considered as an important component of the District's efforts. Effective interventions in this area support youth in maintaining the necessary academic enrichment and support critical to being prepared upon return to their regular classroom and successful school completion.

Employment

According to the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics, the unemployment rate for District youth between the ages 16-19 showed a steady decrease between the years 2000 and 2002 -- with a high of 33.1% in 2000 to a low of 21.5% in 2002. In 2003, the unemployment rate for the same age group showed a 7% increase over 2002, resulting in an unemployment rate

of 28.5%.² The national average for this age group during 2003 was 17.5%. Moreover, the 2003 unemployment rate for youth between the ages of 16-19 was four times the overall unemployment rate in the District for that year – which was 7%. Although the 2004 unemployment rate for youth aged 16-19 has not yet been published, it is likely to show an increase as well. We must implement a comprehensive youth employment strategy throughout the year, which includes paid job training, internship opportunities as well as stipends for educational and vocational participation during the summer.



Mental Health

Research studying juvenile offenders suggests that young offenders often suffer from drug abuse and co-occurring mental illness.³ The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) further estimates that from 5 to 9% of all children and youth will suffer from a diagnosable mental, emotional or behavioral illness.⁴

Since 2002, the Department of Mental Health (DMH) has increased the number of children and youth served in community programs from 1,100 to over 4,600. This increase can be attributed, in part, to new wrap-around and intensive in-home programs, as well as outreach and crisis stabilization.

Not surprisingly, as we increase our prevention and intervention efforts to address youth social and related needs at an earlier point in time, we learn more about the precarious nature of our children's mental health. The School-Based Mental Health Program is currently operating in 30 schools. Last year the program performed over 240 home visits, conducted 314 family therapy sessions, and 1,400 parent consultations. To more effectively ensure the early identification of youth in need of mental health services, while providing an immediate response to the mental health needs of the child and/or family, the School-Based Mental Health Program should be expanded to operate in additional schools.

² Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics.

³ McCord, Joan, Cathy S. Widom, and Nancy A. Crowell. *Juvenile Crime, Juvenile Justice*. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 2001.

⁴ SAMHSA Press Release, June 2, 2003.

Most Prevalent Social and Related Service Needs

In FY 2004, 558 children and youth and their families were referred through the Transformation Schools initiative to the Department of Human Services Strong Families Program for community-based case management services and supports. The Strong Families Program also provided intensive case management services to an additional 428 youth and their families City-wide. Also during 2003 and 2004, 465 youth and families involved in Family Court proceedings were referred to the Mayor's Services Liaison Office at the Family Court for the coordination and facilitation of service delivery among multiple District agencies. The most prevalent presenting issues for the youth and families served by these two initiatives were fairly consistent, and included: mental health and substance abuse treatment; education/academic challenges (including truancy); housing; and emergency financial assistance.

Proposed Strategy to Prevent Juvenile Homicides and Youth Violence

Fully considering the comments received from public and private partners to address the problem of juvenile homicides and youth violence, the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Children, Youth, Families and Elders is proposing a positive youth development strategy comprising 10 key initiatives and/or expansions: 1) strengthening the District's Newborn Initiative and public/private Home Visiting programs; 2) increasing subsidized Child Care Slots for low-income families; 3) development of a Year Round Employment Older Youth Initiative; 4) implementation of Gang Intervention Trainings in targeted areas; 5) establishment of a Second-Responder Program; 6) development of Alternative School Suspension programs; 7) development of a Mentor Training Program; 8) initiating a 3pm -9pm Academic Enrichment Initiative (3pm – 12am during Summer months); 9) "right-sizing" juvenile detention to assure that less serious youth offenders are diverted from debilitating incarceration into needed treatment; and 10) engaging in a diverse and strategic District-wide publicly- and privately-funded Public Information Campaign.

It is essential that we remain committed to marshalling and leveraging all necessary resources to provide for more strategic and rapid prevention and intervention initiatives that ensure the identification and provision of services to youth prior to the commission of more serious, senseless and irreversible acts of violence.

The continuum of care developed under this strategy should incorporate the following elements - to be implemented concurrently:

- **Prevention:** services addressing pre-natal, infant and early childhood care as well as early identification of families and youth at risk; and services to promote healthy growth, choices, education, and family preservation.
- **Intervention:** strategies to respond quickly and comprehensively to family and individual needs before "deep end" services are needed. This should incorporate multi-disciplinary family case management initiatives and intensive services and programming for at risk children and youth.

- **Law Enforcement:** the positive incorporation of law enforcement in an early detection and outreach capacity is critical. They are the first responders to youth violence and criminality but also know the youth and their environment and can serve a resource, diversion and safety function.

Furthermore, this positive youth development strategy must be based on a foundation that enables us to assess our current capacity, effectiveness and gaps in service delivery, with the goal of achieving positive outcomes and transitions for youth. Each of the proposed initiatives is described in more detail below:

1. Expanding Discharge Planning and Home Visitation to Reduce Infant Mortality Rate

Successfully reducing the infant mortality rate in the District of Columbia is contingent upon the adoption of evidence-based practices that incorporate a shared strategy among public, private and community partners. While promising, stand-alone programs have not mirrored the outcomes that can be achieved and measured by more integrated strategies. Essential to best practice, interventions already underway in the District, such as the Newborn Initiative, Healthy Start and Healthy Families programs must be more integrated.

We should adopt the policy recommendations issued by Healthy Families DC in January 2005, to strengthen and develop uniform Home Visiting programs in the District. During 2003 and 2004, more than 200 families city-wide received case management services through home visiting programs provided either by the Department of Health or private provider partners such as Mary's Center. Home visitation must be institutionalized as a comprehensive health and social services strategy for the District of Columbia, providing intensive service delivery, training requirements for service providers, and linkages to community resources. The District must establish a home visiting structure that looks at quality, data collection, and uniformity in the delivery of care. A minimum of \$600,000 should be invested to provide home visiting services to an additional 300 families. Furthermore, the following standards for a comprehensive Home Visiting Program will be included in this program:

- A clearly defined target population by demographics and geographic location
- Established measures and monitoring of acceptance rate of participants in a consistent manner by using a screening assessment tool and tracking the total number of participants enrolled, as well as the total number referred who decline and the reason for declining services
- A uniform intake and assessment process for the early identification of needs, strengths and challenges
- Appropriate resources or referrals for needs identified during the assessment
- Development of positive outreach efforts to engage families and build trust to include: meeting the consumer at pre-natal appointments, visiting the family's home, providing information on the home visiting program and other information on available services, follow-up phone calls to participants and invitations to parenting activities, and case conferences with the referring sources
- Ensure the provision of culturally competent services in multiple languages

- Training and supervision of direct service staff
- Development of policies and procedures to guide service delivery and that allow for a qualitative and quantitative evaluation of the Program

Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) is considered a key indicator of population health, and is used nationally to gauge quality of life. A coordinated and expanded infant mortality reduction strategy for the District must include more comprehensive and uniform home visiting program requirements; a uniform assessment process; early linkages to needed services (counseling, case management, child development screens etc.), and effective discharge planning to work with families immediately following delivery and before discharge. Since FY 2003, DOH has supported a discharge planner in 4 local hospitals at \$212,500 annually. Howard University Hospital and Greater Southeast Hospital have recently agreed to provide enhance discharge planning services. The Department of Health is currently awaiting a similar commitment from Sibley Hospital. An additional \$225,000 would be needed on an annual basis to expand discharge planning services in these three hospitals.

Next Steps:

- Allocation of \$225,000 to expand discharge planning services in Howard University, Greater Southeast and Sibley hospitals
- Complete negotiations with Sibley Hospital to provide discharge planning services
- Adopt of Healthy Families DC standards for implementation of uniform Home Visiting programs
- Allocation of \$600,000 to serve an additional 300 families through Home Visiting programs

2. Increasing Child Care Slots for Low-Income Families

The District's prevention and intervention strategy to reduce the number of juvenile homicides and youth violence must be focused on the earliest opportunity and coordinated if it is to be effective. As such, we must ensure that all children receive a good start in life, including quality early childhood care. Quality early childhood care not only promotes greater family economic stability, but also early success in school.

In the District of Columbia, 65% of young children under the age of 6 live in households with incomes below 200% of poverty. Research compiled by the *Fight Crime: Invest in Kids Initiative* found that at-risk children who were not afforded quality pre-kindergarten were 70% more likely to commit violent crimes than their peers who received high quality programs.

The District must do all it can to ensure that children are ready to learn and develop upon entering school by eliminating the subsidized child-care waiting list – which now exceeds 1,400. To eliminate the waiting list, the city must invest a minimum of \$7,000,000 annually. Elimination of the current child-care waiting list is an important step toward expanding access to high quality early care and education to all at-risk children in the District. Far too many children lack access to high quality programs that impact school success and reduce the likelihood that they will become known to the juvenile justice system. A long-term strategy to prevent and

sustain reductions in youth violence will require a commitment to universal access to high quality early care and education programs for all three and four year olds. We must also remain committed to increasing the quality of our childcare centers, providing greater staff development opportunities for child care staff and implementing standards for all providers.

Next Steps:

- Develop and implement best practice provider standards for quality childcare centers
- Immediately eliminate the subsidized childcare waiting list
- Immediately increase healthcare regulators assigned to monitor childcare centers

3. Year Round Employment for Older Youth Initiative

The alarming increase from 2003 to 2004 in the incidences of violent crime committed by and against youth, and increasing rates of unemployment during the same period clearly reflect the need for job training, vocational and employment programs focused primarily on hard-to-serve youth. Although there is no clear trend regarding the time of year when juvenile homicides occur, the vast majority of these crimes over the last two years occurred during the school year.

A comprehensive and positive youth development strategy should include a year round out-of-school employment program for older youth (between the ages of 16-24) who have been difficult to engage in traditional community-based out-of-school time programs. Research conducted by the University of Colorado Professor Del Elliot found that when African-American males who participated in the study either gained meaningful employment, or got married, their rates of violent crime declined at the same rate as White males. Year round supported employment opportunities can offer guidance, support and services (such as life-skills, academic enrichment, job readiness/pre-employment training and job coaching) that support youth in obtaining the necessary skills critical for getting a job and making a successful transition into young adulthood.

A year round supported employment program should be established to serve a minimum of 215 young people who are between 16 to 24 years of age, and not likely to participate in traditional out-of-school programs. Participants would be paid training wages or stipends depending upon the activity for which they are enrolled. These youth would be identified primarily through community-based organizations serving youth in this age group, as well as through Metropolitan Police Department apprehensions, or youth transitioning out of the juvenile justice system into independent living arrangements.

A substantial contribution is being made by the non-profit community in providing out of school time programming, and essential services and supports to children, youth and their families. A minimum of \$2.9 million in Department of Employment Services funding should be allocated to fund a year round supported employment program for older youth who are unlikely to attend these traditional, community-based out-of-school programs.

Next Steps:

- Develop criteria and referral procedures for youth eligible for Year Round Supported Employment Program
- Establishment of performance and outcome measures leading to permanent employment by the end of the first year of the youths' participation in the program
- Collaboration with the Children Youth Investment Trust Corporation in training, implementation and evaluation of the Year Round Supported Employment Program

4. Gang Intervention Trainings

A unique community-police Gang Intervention Partnership in Wards 1 and 4 and East of the River has led to a significant reduction in the number of gang related incidences of violence and homicides. As a result of the work of the Gang Intervention Partnership established in Ward 1 in 2003, after five Latino related homicides over the course of several weeks, no Latino gang related homicides have been reported. These partnerships need to be expanded to other parts of the city, where the incidences of homicides and violence are the highest, and sustained over a period of time. The Gang Intervention Partnership and East of the River Clergy Police Community Partnership should be adequately funded through the Children Youth Investment Trust Corporation to conduct Gang Intervention trainings in other parts of the city, and assist with building community participation and involvement in these targeted areas.

Gang Intervention collaborations can be successful in reducing the number of gang related incidences of violence and assisting our violence prevention and intervention efforts at schools and other key neighborhood locations. In the aftermath of the gang related murders in Columbia Heights in 2003, \$400,000 was dedicated to funding prevention strategies and programs. Similar funding should be allocated to community-based organizations for training other community-based organizations in successful gang prevention strategies.

Next Steps:

- Allocation of \$800,000 for training in successful gang prevention strategies
- Identification of targeted neighborhoods throughout the District
- Collaboration with the Children Youth Investment Trust Corporation in the identification of community-based organizations to conduct Gang Intervention trainings
- Collaboration with the Children Youth Investment Trust Corporation in training, implementation and evaluation of Gang Intervention Trainings

5. Second Responder Program

The goal of the Second Responder Program is to ensure that we identify, facilitate and coordinate interventions and services for youth and their families prior to their commission of more serious acts of delinquency – as is the case with curfew violators and other status offenders. Similar programs have been implemented in Baltimore, MD and Richmond, VA.

As the first responders to youth violence and delinquency, law enforcement officers know the youth and their environment, and can serve as a critical resource in the early identification of youth at-risk. The Second Responder Program would provide social workers and case workers to work directly with law enforcement officers to rapidly identify and provide direct social services to families and juvenile victims and perpetrators of crime. These social workers and case workers would be assigned to police precincts located in neighborhoods with the highest incidences of juvenile violence. Police officers would identify situations where: a youth is a victim or witness to violence; a youth is behaving in a manner that does not require arrest, so as to prevent such in the future; or situations where an adult indicates having difficulty with an undisciplined or unsupervised child.

Upon receipt of a service referral from an apprehending officer, a social worker/case worker second responder would be dispatched to either the scene of the offense, or the youth's home (so as not to interfere with the officer's investigation), to conduct a comprehensive and uniform assessment of the needs of the youth and the youth's family, and facilitate needed prevention and intervention services. The service worker would be responsible for coordinating the provision of a broad range of interventions, including services to address parent-child conflict, behavioral, health, school and mental health issues. The Second Responder Program would provide a direct and immediate crisis intervention services and case management response to at-risk youth and their families, concurrent with any necessary law enforcement intervention by the apprehending officer.

Case workers and social workers from the District's Strong Families Program, and the Child and Family Services Agency-funded Neighborhood-based Collaboratives, would be identified and cross-trained with police officers on the policies and procedures of the Second Responder Program.

Next Steps:

- Development of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Metropolitan Police Department and social services agencies on the protocols that would govern the implementation of the Second Responder Program
- Allocation of resources to implement and sustain a Second Responder Program
- Identification of second responder service workers
- Establishment of the shifts for operation, and precinct locations, for the Second Responder Program
- Development of a joint training curriculum on the Second Responder Program and timeframe for implementation
- Introduction of legislation to authorize the central collection of individual juvenile and social record information on youth apprehended by law enforcement officers, as well as social service information on their families, for the purpose of tracking and evaluating the effectiveness of our system-wide prevention and intervention efforts (i.e. actual treatment and services being received, multiple agency involvement, community supports etc.)

6. Alternative Suspension and Education Programs

A large segment of youth spend extended periods of time out of school without any adult supervision or academic programming when they are suspended for infractions of school policies. These youth often fall behind academically, and lack meaningful and constructive opportunities during the school day. Some of these youth may fall so far behind during these extended periods of out of school suspension that they end up playing catch for the entire year, or begin to lose interest in school altogether and drop out of school.

An investment in Alternative Suspension and Education programs would provide youth who have been disengaged, suspended, or expelled from school with the opportunity to maintain his/her academic coursework under the supervision of an instructor and/or counselor in a program designed to meet the student's unique needs. Alternative centers should be located in targeted areas with the highest incidences of school disengagement. The programs should be staffed by certified teachers, instructors and other qualified providers, and offer academic support, homework assistance, mentoring and counseling – and monitoring of the youth's attendance.

Next Steps:

- Identification of schools with the highest incidences of school disengagement (as reflected by truancy, suspension, expulsion and drop out rates)
- Integration of the concept of Alternative Suspension and Education programs into the Strategic Plan for D.C. Public Schools
- Collaborate with Board of Education, D.C. Public Schools and Public Charter Board to develop protocols and policies and procedures for the operation of Alternative Suspension and Education programs, as well as to identify sources of funding

7. Peer Mentor/Street Worker Program

Peer mentors who know the youth and their neighborhoods can provide youth referred by the courts and the schools with positive role models and supportive adult relationships. Peer mentors can often provide the most influential, supportive, and consistent contact with youth in need of adult guidance and positive lifestyles. The Peer Mentor Training Program would focus on youth between the ages of 15-17, and consist of two key elements: 1) offering training and a salary to adults (18 years of age and older), residing in the same community as the youth they are serving, to serve as mentors to youth; and 2) a “train the mentee” component, whereby these young adult paid mentors train their mentees and other young adults to become mentors. As the East of the River Clergy Police Community Partnership (CPCP) recently received a grant to develop a high-quality mentoring program, the CPCP could provide invaluable assistance with the initial recruitment and training of the young adult mentors who reside in neighborhoods with high incidences of violence. The District's Roving Leaders Program will be restructured, and \$1.5 million in funding re-allocated to support peer mentors and street workers working with directly with community organizations. These workers could provide intensive street-based outreach focused on intervention and primary prevention efforts.

Next Steps:

- Collaborate with the Department of Parks and Recreation and the Children Youth Investment Trust Corporation to develop the solicitation for a Paid Peer Mentoring Program
- Identify targeted neighborhoods and eligibility criteria for peer mentors
- Development of uniform standards of operation and performance and outcome measures
- Identification of youth to be supported by peer mentors and establishment of referral process

7. Late-Night Recreational Activities and the 3pm-9pm Academic Enrichment Initiative

In reviewing the Metropolitan Police Department juvenile homicide data from 2004, the majority of juvenile homicide victims were slain during late evening and early morning hours. The Department of Recreation recently re-introduced Late Night Hoops at several recreation facilities and hopes to expand upon this and other constructive programs for older youth until 12am during the summer months.

We also know that one of the predictable indicators of youth involvement in delinquent activities is the absence of positive and constructive outlets during after-school hours. Extending the hours for after-school programs to 9pm would provide additional opportunities during which youth are engaged with caring staff in structured, academic and after-school programs.

The 3pm-9pm Academic Enrichment Initiative would require the establishment of a formal relationship with the schools to link recreational programs in a way that ensures a more direct response to the academic needs of youth and a seamless transition from school to out of school activities. As such, tutoring and assistance with homework assignments would be key components of the 3pm-9pm Initiative. In addition, youth and family serving organizations will be funded to provide programs in recreation centers in targeted neighborhoods.

Next Steps:

- Collaborate with community-based organizations, the Children Youth Investment Trust Corporation, Department of Parks and Recreation and the D.C. Public Schools to develop after-school programs with expanded hours of operation
- Work with the Children Youth Investment Trust Corporation to support and fund grantees providing programs within recreation centers in communities with high incidences of juvenile crime

9. Juvenile Justice Continuum of Care

Research is increasingly demonstrating that when youth are unnecessarily confined in large, prison-like institutions, their criminality grows more serious. By contrast, best- practices or

promising approaches programs are showing marked reductions in juvenile re-arrests. In the coming year, the District's goal is to reduce the use of secure confinement for 90 youth and create 150 community-based slots in evening reporting centers, in-home family services, youth development; and extended family homes in lieu of confinement. The Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services will also outstation case managers in one Ward to pilot the process for out-stationing caseworkers in public-private partnerships in community settings.

Next Step:

- Ensure the continued collaboration between the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services, District social services agencies, and community and faith-based partners in developing a continuum of care for youth involved in the juvenile justice system

10. Public Information Campaign

As we implement new initiatives focused more directly on reducing the number of juvenile homicides and youth violence, there must be a substantial investment in an aggressive and strategic Public Information Campaign – which would include posters, radio and public service announcements. Youth leaders from the Youth Advisory Council could engage other District youth in developing relevant and effective messages geared toward youth, such as: “Stop the Violence”; “Stop the Killing”, “Remember the Victims” etc. messages. The Mayor, members of the Clergy, Teachers, Law Enforcement Officers, and youth could assist in delivering public service announcements that would be effective for youth audiences. Posters could be strategically located in the neighborhoods experiencing the highest incidences of youth violence and juvenile homicides -- in the windows of businesses, youth service providers, schools, recreational facilities and libraries, and posted on Metro buses with routes in those areas.

Next Steps:

- Work with community and faith-based organizations and youth leaders to develop an effective Public Information Campaign around addressing the problem juvenile violence
- Work with the Mayor and private sector to raise \$1,000,000 for an effective Public Information Campaign specifically targeted to, and developed by, youth

The 10-Point Youth Development Strategy proposed herein was developed in collaboration with stakeholder District agencies and community partners, and incorporates many of the recommendations and suggestions offered by these reviewers. Ultimately, the District's Youth Development Strategy must be viewed as a living plan, implementation of which will require the commitment and support of all the three branches of District government. This plan must also be embraced by all partners working to reduce incidences of violence committed by and against juveniles in the District of Columbia, particularly the children and families we serve.